

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.

**Rick Scott**

Governor

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State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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HEALTH OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE PROPER HYGIENE PRACTICES

Gastrointestinal Illnesses Reported in Escambia County, Florida

PENSACOLA, FL – An increased number of gastrointestinal infections have been reported in Escambia County, Florida. The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County would like to remind the community of proper hygiene practices to prevent gastrointestinal illness.

Gastrointestinal infections can be highly contagious and are usually spread through person to person contact with an infected person, contact with contaminated surfaces, or contaminated food or drinking water. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, low to high grade fever, and headache.

Most gastrointestinal infections can be prevented with proper hygiene practices, clean drinking water, and safe food preparation. The best way to avoid contracting or spreading these infections is to take the following precautions:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom, handling diapers, and before preparing or eating food.
- Use proper hand washing practices by rubbing soapy water on hands and under fingernails for 15 to 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- If you become ill, stay home. If your child becomes ill, keep him/her out of school or childcare until free from symptoms for 48 hours.
- If you are sick with vomiting or diarrhea, do not prepare food for other people.
- Thoroughly disinfect contaminated surfaces by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated after an episode of diarrhea or vomiting.
- Cook foods properly and wash fruits and vegetables before serving. Use separate cutting boards and utensils for preparing meats, fish, vegetables, or fruits.

Treatment for gastrointestinal illness includes drinking plenty of clear fluids and getting rest. Dehydration may be a concern, especially among elderly adults and young children, so it is important to maintain proper fluid replacement. If you have severe symptoms, including bloody stool, vomiting that does not resolve, high fever, or signs of dehydration such as reduced urination, you should contact your doctor.

For more information about prevention of these infections through proper hand hygiene please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing>. If you are concerned that you have a gastrointestinal infection, please contact your doctor.

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Florida Department of Health

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